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## THE YOUNG WOMAN ON THE FARM<sup>1</sup>

MARTHA FOOTE CROW

Introduction by

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The Department of Home Economics at Cornell University is interested in the country girl in America. Much is done for the farmer's wife, in the



FIG. 118.—*The country girl's play*

belief that she shares, to an equal degree with the farmer himself, the opportunities and responsibilities of the farm in building up rural progress. At the present time the girls are deciding whether they will leave country

<sup>1</sup> A discussion of Country Life for Young Women, with a questionnaire to be returned by the reader.

life for city occupations. The opportunity for a young woman to earn money is greater in the city than in the country, and the woman of to-day has become an economic factor to be considered in the business world. Unless she marries she must have money of her own, and even if married she is not averse to handling a share of the income. *Shall the girl who desires financial independence go to the city in order to earn this income, or shall she find industrial opportunity in the rural community?*

Another tendency with the country girl is to go where she will have more company and recreation than she finds in the country. Can rural life be developed so that she will find enjoyment there, rather than be compelled to seek it in the cities, where the game of life is harder to play and where social opportunity such as can be found among the friends at home will be harder to obtain? It must be granted that the country girl should have relaxation and recreation if she is to become a well-rounded, useful woman. *What can be developed in the country that will increase the play spirit and standardize country games?*

As the business of farming progresses women are needed to take care of the home life, which must be developed in larger degree as the business increases. Most parents desire that their daughters should not work so hard as they themselves have been accustomed to work, and with this in view they have sacrificed much in order to enable the young persons to leave home. Has not that policy been a mistaken one sometimes? Is not the abounding life of the country girl needed in order to standardize household duties on the farm, to simplify farm home labor, and to give new life to the social forces of rural districts? Should she not give time and study to learning how to do this? What are the possibilities of labor-saving devices in the farm household? The boy will not stay at home with the old-fashioned plow; neither will the girl stay by the broom and the dish pan if the vacuum cleaner and the well-drained sink can be obtained.

Many girls and boys are turned away from the farm because they hear mother and father say so often that farming is a poor business. The child is made to feel that storekeeping or doctoring or some other occupation is much better than farming. If the farmer does not take pride in his calling, his children will not. If the mother finds only drudgery in her household duties, the daughter may partake of the same spirit. The mother's point of view has been influenced by weariness and discouraging conditions. The daughter may find a rosier hue in life than her mother does, because she is less fatigued and weather-beaten. But we grow weary much sooner when our attitude of mind is unhappy toward our piece of work than when it is happy. *Shall we dignify farm housekeeping by good equipment and scientific management, and create in young women a zest for the work that calls to them?*

## THE YOUNG WOMAN ON THE FARM

MARTHA FOOTE CROW

In the present widespread movement for country-life progress the question that the young woman will promptly ask is, Am I doing my share? Professor G. W. Fiske says, in "The Challenge of the Country," that "men can never solve the rural problem without the help of women."

Such a statement as this will have a strong appeal to the younger women, for the future and all its possibilities lie in their hands.

### VALUE OF THE COUNTRY GIRL TO THE FARM

We wonder whether the country girl realizes how important her place is in the structure of the rural community. She has a very definite part there, and it is a valuable one. As the acknowledged maker of home comfort and the foreordained leader of sociabilities in the rural neighborhood, she has a service that no one can take from her hands. In fact, what the young woman on the farm does or does not do, the part that she takes

in the social life and in the organizations in her vicinity, her recreations and her work—all her activities, in fine, have a bearing on the refinement of the farm home and the farm community. On the younger women, therefore, rather more than on any other class, depends the ultimate success of farming as a satisfactory community life.

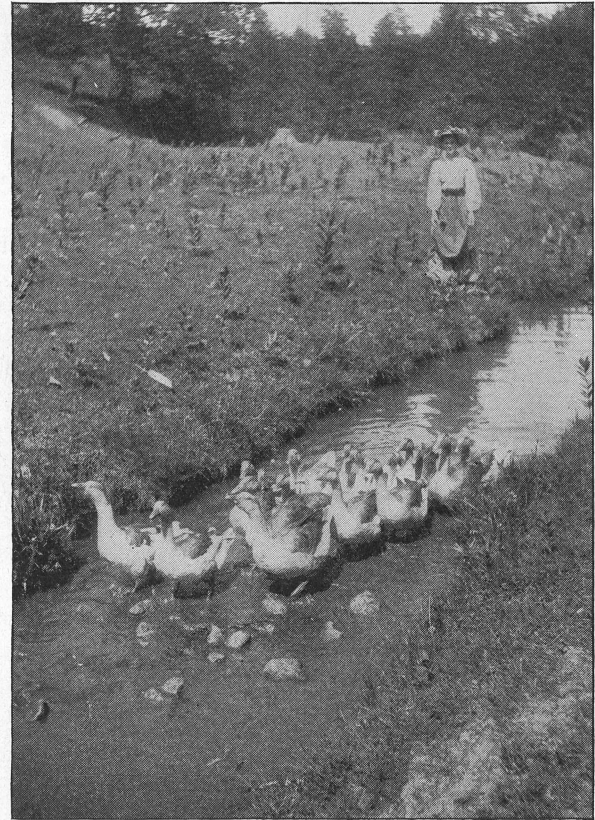


FIG. 119.—A possible occupation

### WORK AT THE FARMSTEAD

We know that there is a large amount of work to be done in the farm home, but farmers' daughters in this country are very brave and capable



and ready to lend a hand. As a general thing, the young woman has it in her power to make her work all drudgery or she can transform it into a pleasure. How to do this is for her to study out.

#### THE FARM AS A BUSINESS

It used to be believed and said that the business of the farm ought to be wholly in the hands of the farmer and his sons. It is now understood that the work in the house is an essential part of the farm business, and that in the remainder of the labor of the farm the wife and the daughters have just as keen an interest as have the father and the brothers. Moreover, many a woman is nowadays undertaking the operation of the farm itself, and is making good, too.

In a late novel, entitled "The Wind before the Dawn," a picture is drawn of a woman who took hold of a farm that had been mismanaged. She brought it up to an almost ideal state of productivity; she used good judgment in planning; she kept things shipshape — and she succeeded. There are many counterparts to this experience in real life, and they are found in all parts of this country.

It is therefore possible for us to believe that every daughter can grow to be an aid to her father in his business as a farmer, and that gradually she may enter into full responsibility for some part of the farm business; or that perhaps, if it should ever be necessary for her to do so, she may become a successful manager for all the activities of a farm.

#### NEW INDUSTRIES

In the farm home of early New England days, the labor of the women included not only all the common work that falls to the hands of women in the present day, but also the spinning and weaving, the dyeing and fulling, the dressmaking and tailoring, the candle-making and soap-making, and many other industries that now, along with those mentioned, have gone out of the farmhouse and taken up their abode in the factory. In those days the hands of the women were full of wage-earning labor.

To-day also there are many women, and especially young women, who feel that they need some addition to their earning opportunity, and to these many doors are now opening. The revival of our ancient industries offers an alluring prospect, although this may not be the most practical field.

Is it not generally the most sensible thing to take the opportunity that stands by one's own garden gate? Why not, then, make a careful study of the farm conditions right at hand, in order to find out whether there may not be some fruit or vegetable product going to waste that can be utilized by the excellent modern methods of canning and preserving, so





FIG. 120.—*The daughter's inheritance*

that the family may be economically supplied with delicacies all the year round and some extra quantities may be sold that will bring a good income? Something like this should be possible for any energetic and capable farmer's daughter.

Perhaps, again, as a result of this discussion of the young woman's duty and opportunity in the rural community, we shall have many ingenious suggestions from girls all over the country as to clever ways of earning money. This is what we greatly desire; and to this end may we ask that question No. 6 on the discussion paper be answered with considerable fullness, that no good suggestion may be omitted?

There are now over six million country girls in our land. Does it not look as though this body of eager, buoyant young women might add something valuable to the welfare of our rural life, if they could but be of one mind as to the formation and expression of their ideals and as to the practical means of realizing those ideals in actual life?

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**Extracts from some letters from farmers' wives**

"Now that we farmers' wives have learned so many things in our reading-courses, such excellent truths about the chemistry of food and about sanitary conditions, have been taught how to work, how to rest, how to beautify our homes, how to stay young and to be lovable and lovely — I would like to talk a little about how we may keep our children in the rural home.

"As a beginning I would suggest that no one should ever, in their hearing, deplore the dullness and drudgery of farm life. Rather let us teach them from infancy to prize its pristine quiet and peace. I would dress the boys and girls as well as my means would allow and in no way different from the young people who live in the town. I should hope that my boy would never hear the remark made concerning him, 'He looked like a regular old farmer!' As far as possible I should let the boys and girls do what they wanted to do. If they wanted to plaster the walls of their rooms with posters that did not appeal to my taste, I would make quarts of paste for them. If they wanted thirteen pillows for a cosy corner, I would cut up Aunt Caroline's feather bed for them. I would read with them the books that they liked rather than the books that I thought they ought to like. And if they gloried in some wild tale of the sea, I would have patience, knowing that the time would come when they would enjoy 'The Chambered Nautilus' and 'The King of the Golden River.'

"Why do so many boys and girls want to leave the farm? It is because, unless the parents are thoughtful in regard to rearing and training the young minds, the children on the farm fail to observe the beautiful possibilities and opportunities of the country life; are apt to think that there is too much work for the amount of profit, and no time for the sports so natural to children. A boy is so handy on the farm to run and do this, that, and



everything, that the time goes without thinking that all work and no play is not a wise and profitable way to keep the children on the farm."

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"As I look at it, there are the same amusements for girls that there are for boys in the outdoor life. The girls enjoy caring for animals as well as the boys do; also they like the care of flowers, and even the plants in the garden and all over the farm; and they are more inclined than the boys are to see the beauties of everything in nature. Besides, the girl can combine the life in the home with the life of nature, thus having the better part.

"It seems to me there is an erroneous idea that when a woman reaches mature years thoughts of reading, and of the development to be gained through it, should be put away along with other childish things. This idea is sufficiently widespread to give a feeling of separateness to the sensitive woman who cherishes these ideals. Some knowledge of botany, geology, and astronomy are for the mother particularly desirable in order that she may interest her children in nature. It is seldom, indeed, when on a starry night I do not remember with keenest satisfaction that my mother taught me to know Orion and some other constellations when we looked out upon the heavens. A woman, if she cannot read much, can read a little. She can pore over a favorite book, a poem, or even a sentence till it becomes a part of her very being. Culture depends not so much on multitudinous opportunities as on making the fullest use of what we have. The problem of life consists in learning to make the most of all things, whether they be material or the abiding things of the spirit."